With our sincere and hearty Thanks for these wonderful and manifold Blessings, let us add our unfeigned Prayers to the Throne of Grace, and beseech Almighty God to defend and protect these Kingdoms in their Religion, Liberties, and Commerce, and to give us, in his good Time, a secure, lasting, and honourable Peace; that he would be pleased, as the most happy Means to so glorious an End, to guard and prolong the Life of our most gracious Sovereign, and to bless and preserve the Royal Family; that when the greatest and best of Kings, full of Days and Honour, shall change his temporal for an eternal Crown, We may never want a Prince, of his Illustrious House, blessed with all the Virtues of his Ancestors, to reign over these Kingdoms, in great Dignity and Prosperity, and to govern a free, dutiful, and united People, in Righteousness, Justice and Mercy. Amen.

FINIS.

10.

A

SERMON,

PREACHED AT

ST. NICHOLAS' CHURCH, in NEWCASTLE,

On THURSDAY, Sept. 4, 1766.

AT THE

ANNIVERSARY MEETING

OF THE

SONS OF THE CLERGY.

By JOHN DARCH, B. D.

FELLOW of *Balliol* College, in *Oxford*, and VICAR of *Long-Benton*, in *Northumberland*.

Publiſhed at the Requeſt of the Society.

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A

SERMON, &c.

JAMES i. 27.

Pure Religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, to visit the Fatherless and Widows in their Affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the World.

IT appears to be one great Design of this Epistle of St. *James*, to correct the Misconstructions which had been put upon some Parts of the Writings of St. *Paul:* Particularly in Relation to the Article of Justification; which, when applied to the *final* Acceptance of Man with God, had been represented as consisting only of a bare Faith, independent, as well of personal Purity, as of brotherly Love.*

 It

* Justification or Righteousness (Δικαιοσυνη in the Original) is often used in the New Testament to signify the *first Acceptance* of a Sinner with God, or his Admission into the Christian Covenant. See the 3d, 4th, and 5th Chapters of the Epistle to the *Romans*. But for the full Proof of this Point, the Reader is recommended to that valuable Work which Mr *Taylor* has prefixed to his *Paraphrase on the Epistle to the Romans, as a Key to the Apostolic Writings*.

This *first Justification* then (the Privilege of Christians in general, whether good or bad) must carefully be distinguished from that *personal Righteousness* which is requisite in order to our *final Acceptance*. with God, or Acquittance at the last Day.

The

It was natural for St. *Paul*, when describing the Excellence of the Christian Salvation, to insist particularly on the Necessity of Faith, or a firm Trust and Confidence in the Efficacy of that Salvation, and of that only. It was even necessary for him to do this; in Opposition to those who had confounded the Mosaic Dispensation with the Christian; and insisted on the Obligation of the Law, though by the gracious Terms of the Gospel, they were happily freed from it.

In

The Instrument, in the *final* as well as in the *first* Justification, is Faith: But Faith must be very differently considered when applied to the one and to the other. As the Instrument of the first Justification, it signifies properly *Belief*: (a *Belief* of the *whole Gospel*, not a Reliance on some particular Declarations of it only) When it is assigned as effectual to final Justification, it means rather *Faithfulness*, (*Fidelitas*) that is, a Life suitable to such Belief.

Now there is no Inconsistency in supposing the utter Insufficiency of that Faith in order to the *final* Justification, which may be very effectual for the *first*. And thus, whether we maintain with St. *Paul*, *that we must be finally saved by Faith*, as it signifies a *Belief of the Gospel, and a Life conformable to such Belief*; or whether we say, with St. *James*, that *by Works a Man is justified*, and that we must *shew forth our Faith by our Works*; the Difference, I apprehend, will not be great, either in Regard to our Belief or Practice.

It is farther to be observed, that Justification, as it signifies the *first* Acceptance of Sinners with God, like many other Scripture Expressions, (such as Adoption, Election, Sanctification, *&c.*) had a peculiar Reference to those to whom it was first applied; to Persons who had been born and educated in a State either of Judaism or of Idolatry, and were from thence converted to the Christian Faith. It is not therefore *strictly* applicable to Christians of the present Age and Nation at all.

If however any one thinks himself concerned in it, *by fair and equitable Construction*; let him also consider—how far *this Justification alone* will avail him, in Regard to his *final Acceptance* with God; and whether it is seriously to be believed, that nothing *more* is required of *him* through the whole Course of his Christian Life, than was required of a *Jewish or Gentile Convert to Christianity*, even upon his Conversion and first Reception of the Gospel of Christ.

In this View, as well as others, the Apoſtle might well maintain that we muſt be ſaved by Faith in Jeſus Chriſt, and not by the Works of the Law of *Moſes*.

But that we muſt be *finally* ſaved by Faith, conſidered as a mere Act of the Mind, without Works of Righteouſneſs, of Charity, and of Purity;—this is a manifeſt Contradiction to the whole Scope and Deſign of the Chriſtian Religion: And that Men ſhould ſeriouſly maintain ſo ſtrange a Doctrine, is ſuch an Inſult upon the common Senſe and Underſtanding of Mankind, as, one would have thought, could never have been ſubmitted to, eſpecially by Perſons at Liberty to *ſearch the Scriptures*, were it not abundantly proved from Experience.

The Miniſters of the Goſpel therefore, have ſtill great Reaſon, as on the one Hand to maintain the Neceſſity of Faith, in the full Senſe of the Word, as ſignifying a Belief of the Truth and Certainty of the Chriſtian Revelation in general, in Oppoſition to the faſhionable Scepticiſm of the Age; ſo on the other, to inſiſt likewiſe on the indiſpenſible Obligation of Works,—Works of Piety, of Charity, and of Purity,—in order to guard againſt that Enthuſiaſm, and Zeal without Knowledge, which abound ſo much in the World.*

The

* The vain Pretenſions of ſome modern Enthuſiaſts are well repreſented in an *Eſſay on Enthuſiaſm*, printed in the *Royal Magazine* for laſt *July*; which accidentally came into my Hands.

I hope the ingenious Author will not be offended at my preſenting my Readers with the following Extracts from it.—" All Sins have the " Devil for their Author; but Enthuſiaſm is, perhaps, his Maſterpiece; " as he there ſheweth himſelf moſt a Devil, where he can moſt deceive. " To captivate the Unthinking and Profligate, he makes Uſe of the Plea-

" ſures

The Design of the present Solemnity points out the former of the two Duties mentioned in my Text for the Subject of our present Attention: *Pure Religion and undefiled before God*, even *the Father is this; to visit the Fatherless and Widows in their Affliction.*

By *visiting* the Fatherless and Widows, we must be understood to take all proper Care of them, giving them according to our Abilities, such Advice and Relief as their respective Conditions may require. —By *thus visiting* the Fatherless and Widows, we must not think ourselves excused from doing the like charitable Offices to any others, who shall be found, upon the Whole, equally deserving of them. Orphans and Widows are here mentioned, not as the only Objects of our Charity, but as being often the first and best entitled to it.

I shall

" sures of Sense; but for the Serious and Devout, he hath Toils of a " finer Sort. And thus, after a Man has overcome two of his Enemies " the World and the Flesh, he often falls a Prey to the Devil, who is the " most dangerous of the three.—Pride and Ignorance conspire to form an " Enthusiast. Through Pride such an one leaves the Flock where he is " undistinguished, and walks by himself, that he may be taken Notice " of; through Ignorance he loses his Way, and falls into the Enemy's " Hands. Being proud, he despises the ordinary Means, and expects the " Spirit without them; being ignorant, he embraces a strong Delusion " instead of it.—Enthusiasts are always talking of themselves. They can do " nothing, but it is deemed worthy to be had in everlasting Remembrance; " and you are to think Heaven and Earth are engaged and interested in " every Step they take, while going from one Market Town to another. " Nothing happens to them as to other People, but all is Prodigy and " Miracle. The Public is surfeited with the Divine Communications " which they enjoy, and the frequent Interviews they have with God. " They are the only spiritual Men. Others are Legalists, and Formalists, " and Followers of a Church-wall Religion.—The Fancies of a private " Spirit are preferred by an Enthusiast to Ordinances instituted by Autho-

" rity

I ſhall make it my Buſineſs therefore, to conſider,

FIRST, The Importance of Brotherly Love, or Charity to Perſons in Diſtreſs, in general. And,

SECONDLY, The Reaſonableneſs of making ſome particular Proviſion for thoſe Orphans and Widows, whoſe ſingular Circumſtances of Diſtreſs are the Occaſion of this Day's Solemnity.

FIRST, I am to conſider the Importance of Brotherly Love, or Charity to Perſons in Diſtreſs, in general.

Now in order that any outward Act of Kindneſs to another may properly come under the Name and Notion of Charity; it muſt proceed from a Principle of Love or Benevolence in general, rooted in the Heart,

" rity. When the Bells call him to Prayers, he conſults his own Diſpo-
" ſition; and the Conſequence often is, that he ſtays at Home. A Perſon
" of this Complexion will tell you, that he never finds ſo much Benefit
" from faſting, as when he faſts on a *Monday*; for which one might be at
" a Loſs to aſſign a Reaſon, if one did not recollect, that the Church hath
" appointed *Friday* for that Purpoſe. Sometimes his Life is to be go-
" verned and directed by Lots, and if he ſhould awake at Midnight, Hea-
" ven muſt in that Manner inform him, whether he is to ariſe, or to take
" the other Nap. Toward Sectaries of all Kinds the Hearts of Enthu-
" ſiaſts are enlarged, and they have Charity for every Thing but the
" Church. Of all Men they are the moſt obſtinate and incorrigible. They
" have an Impulſe to warrant them, and to queſtion that, is to quench
" the Spirit. This makes it almoſt impoſſible that they ſhould be con-
" vinced of their Errors. From the Follies of the World, and the Sins
" of the Fleſh, many have been reclaimed: But of thoſe whom Enthuſiaſm
" has miſled, and cauſed to wander from the Truth, few have had the
" Modeſty to acknowledge their Error, and the Reſolution to forſake it.
" The Enthuſiaſt is above Inſtruction, and Proof againſt Exhortation;
" and when your Arguments have put it out of his Power to anſwer, with
" a Countenance quite unembarraſſed, he fetches a deep Sigh, and tells
" you, he will pray for you!

actuating and influencing the whole Conduct. For the *Morality* of an Action, in all Cases, depends upon the *Intention* of the Agent: And we are expressly told, in the present Instance, that the outward Act is absolutely insignificant, if it proceed not from a good Principle. *Though I bestow all my Goods to feed the Poor*, saith an Apostle, *and have not Charity*; do not perform these outward Acts of Kindness from a Principle of Love, and Brotherly Affection; *it profiteth me nothing*.

But the Love of our Neighbour, rightly understood, issuing from a Principle of Benevolence, ruling in the Heart, and built upon the Love of God, as its only proper Foundation, is the best Proof we can give of the Purity, the Influence, and the Efficacy of our Religion.

For the Business of Religion is, to improve the Heart as well as the Understanding; to make Men not only wiser, but better. This is so evidently the Design of Christianity, that I might well be charged with an unnecessary Undertaking, were I to enter upon the Proof of it. It is sufficient to my present Purpose to remark, that this Design is never effectually answered, but when it disposes us to the habitual Exercise of Brotherly Love and Kindness: And that, as the Love of God naturally leads to the Love of our Neighbour, the Love of our Neighbour, thus established, is the proper Foundation for the general Practice of Virtue and Goodness.

The Reason is; because the chief Obstruction that Religion meets with, in forming the Heart to Virtue, arises, I apprehend, from that Selfishness, which is born with us; and which, if I mistake not, constitutes, in

in a great Measure, the Depravity and Corruption of human Nature.*

Now the benevolent Affections are directly opposite to this selfish Principle. When therefore the former of these prevail in the Heart, the latter must necessarily be kept under and corrected: In this Case, the Way is open to every Virtue, to every Thing that is good and commendable: And thus it is that the Love of our Neighbour becomes the immediate Foundation for the habitual Practice of Virtue and Goodness in general.

If we pursue this Observation, we shall find that most other Duties are much inferior to the Duty of Charity; or that Charity is the Improvement and Perfection, as well as the Foundation, of the Whole Duty of Man.

Let us consider the Excellence of Charity, as it distinguishes the three general Branches of Man's Duty, to God, his Neighbour, and himself.

I begin

* By *Selfishness*, I mean an excessive, inordinate Love of ourselves; in Opposition to Self-Love, considered as a natural, and as a religious Principle: Such a Love of Self, and of present Gratification, as makes a Man forget his *own* true and real Interest, as well as that Love which he owes to God and to his Fellow-Creatures, which is, in Fact, intimately and essentially connected with Self-Love, rightly understood. And in assigning this Selfishness as the general Cause of the Depravity of Man, I hope, I have not represented human Nature as being either better or worse than it really is. If we consult our own Breasts, we shall generally find, that whenever we are guilty of any great Violation of our Duty, there is something of Selfishness at the Bottom of it: It proceeds from the inordinate Love of Pleasure, for Instance, or of Profit, or Honour.

And if we believe the Oracles of Truth; what was it but this Selfishness that misled our first Parents: The Desire of immediate Self-Gratification and Indulgence, regardless of the Consequences?

Agreeably

I begin with the laſt of theſe.

Temperance, Induſtry, Frugality, however uſeful to ourſelves, never appear ſo excellent, as when practiſed from the additional Motive of Good-Will to others. When any one is frugal and temperate in the Uſe of the good Things he poſſeſſes, that out of his Abundance a larger Supply may be made for the Wants of others: Or when another is induſtrious in his Calling, with a Deſire to procure ſomewhat more than what is neceſſary for his own Subſiſtance, that he may have to give, if it be but ſome ſmall Share, to him that needeth: In ſuch Caſes, Temperance, Induſtry, and Frugality, muſt be allowed to carry with them peculiar Degrees of Excellence, and to become truly virtuous.

So in Regard to ſuch Duties as immediately concern our Neighbour, whether in his Reputation, Property, or Life:—Not to injure any one in either of theſe, is reckoned ſome Proof of a Man's Honour, and

Agreeably to this Account of the Fall, the Redeemer of Mankind was uſhered into the World with this ſignal Proclamation—*of Peace on Earth, and Good-Will towards Men:* Theſe were to be the diſtinguiſhed Bleſſings of Meſſiah's Kingdom.

But as it is not the Deſign of Grace *ordinarily* to over-rule the Powers of Nature, or to force Men to be good and virtuous: It is no Wonder if we often find this ſelfiſh Diſpoſition ſtill uppermoſt in the Heart: No Wonder, if, ſince the whole Chriſtian Life is a Life of Trial, the ſubduing of this extravagant Fondneſs for ourſelves conſtitute the chief Part of this Trial.

Accordingly the Apoſtle hath expreſsly told us that this would be the Caſe: *In the laſt Days*, ſays he, (2 *Tim.* iii. 1.) (that is, even under the laſt and beſt Diſpenſation, that of the Goſpel) *Perilous Times ſhall come—Men ſhall be Lovers of their own ſelves:* He not only reckons this exceſſive Self-Love as *one* great Inſtance of Man's Depravity, but as the *firſt* and *principal* Corruption of human Nature.

and of his Honesty. But in the View of Charity, it is a small Thing not to injure another. The charitable Person is ever ready to do Good to his Neighbour, when he has an Opportunity, even at the Expence of his own Property, Reputation and sometimes Life itself.

We may add, that as to our Duty to God, Charity is so essential to it, that it can in no Wise subsist without it: To profess to love God, while Men hate one another,—this is not Piety, but Hypocrisy, an Abomination both to God and Man.

So then Christian Charity, more than having barely that Relation to Virtue, which is supposed to connect its several Branches, is the very Perfection of Virtue and Goodness itself.

But let us attend to the Representation which Scripture gives of this Duty.

Our blessed Lord having said that the first and great Commandment was the Love of God, adds, that the second is like unto it, *Thou shalt love thy Neighbour as thyself: On these two Commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets.* Observe the Order and Character of this Duty of Brotherly Love. It is not only the *second great Commandment*, but is like unto the *first*; naturally arising from it, and essentially connected with it: The Neglect therefore of the one of these Precepts is utterly inconsistent with the Observance of the other: He who sincerely loves God, will love his Brother also; and he who does not really love both, cannot properly love either.

St. *Paul*, having enumerated several particular Duties, concludes, *If there be any other Cammandment, it*

is briefly comprehended in this Saying, namely, Thou shalt love thy Neighbour as thyself. The Reason is, that Love extendeth to all Instances of Duty between Man and Man: In the Language of the Apostle, *Love worketh no Ill to his Neighbour;* the Meaning is, that it is ever ready to do him Good: *Therefore Love is the fulfilling of the Law.*

And in the Epistle to *Timothy*, Charity is expressly declared to be *the End of the Commandment*; that is, of the whole Christian Religion.

I might produce Passages of Scripture in Abundance setting forth the Excellence of Charity: I might shew the great Superiority of it, in the Christian Scheme, even to the miraculous Gifts and Endowments of the Holy Ghost, in the Infancy of Christianity, as well as to Faith and Hope, the ordinary Work of the Blessed Spirit in these our Days. But I think it unnecessary to enlarge on this Argument; and therefore shall close it with the Testimony of the great Apostle: That Apostle, who because he has warmly and zealously asserted the Necessity of Faith in order to Salvation; has been often understood as if he meant to exclude the Use of Works, as no Way requisite to this Purpose. In his Epistle to the *Colossians*, having exhorted them to *put on* (*as the Elect of God, holy and beloved*) *Bowels of Mercies, Kindness, Humbleness of Mind, Meekness, Long-Suffering; to forbear one another, and to forgive one another, if any Man have a Quarrel against any;—even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye*: He adds, *and* above *all these Things* (or as the Words might be rendered *upon* all these Things) *put on Charity, which is the Bond of Perfectness.* Having represented

ſented Chriſtianity under the Similitude of a Garment or Clothing; he tells them that upon all other Parts of it they muſt put on Charity, if they would complete and adorn the Whole. The Figure is very ſignificant, and highly expreſſive of that Importance which I have been aſcribing to this Duty.*

Should it be ſaid that *too much is here aſcribed to Charity; and that Faith and Hope are not allowed their proper Share in the Buſineſs of Religion:* I would aſk; what are Faith and Hope, but the *Inſtruments* of Righteouſneſs? What are they, but the *Means*, not the *End* of Religion? For Chriſtianity doth not conſiſt in Speculation: Nothing but what is moral and practical can be the proper End of it. Now neither Faith nor Hope is directly of this Nature: They are, ſtrictly ſpeaking, mere Acts of the Mind; intended to influence the Heart and Affections, and to bring forth Works of Righteouſneſs; but are no farther to be eſteemed than they really do this.

Do we then make void theſe Gifts and Graces of the Spirit: Particularly, what is by others ſo much extolled, the

* The Word Θρησκεία in my Text literally means *Religious Worſhip*; and ſo is not improperly rendered *Religion*. But if we keep in Mind the ſtrict Meaning of the Word, it will give a particular Force to the preſent Argument. For in this View, it will teach us that even the moſt ſolemn Acts of religious Worſhip and Devotion are utterly inſignificant, if they are not accompanied with Brotherly Kindneſs: And that it is in vain to pretend to approach God with our Lips, whilſt our Hearts are eſtranged from the Love of our Neighbour. All which perfectly agrees with that Declaration in Scripture, (the Truth of which ſtands atteſted by our bleſſed Lord himſelf) that *to love the Lord our God with all our Heart—and our Neighbour as ourſelves—is more than all whole Burnt-Offerings and Sacrifices.* (Mark xii. 33.)

the Gift of Faith? God forbid: On the contrary, we eſtabliſh it—for this Reaſon—becauſe we do aſſign it as the Means and Inſtrument of Righteouſneſs. This we conſider as the End and Deſign of all Religion: A Deſign ſo important in itſelf, ſo eſſential to Happineſs temporal and eternal, that it ſhews great Indiſcretion in any Man to neglect ſuch Means as are of Uſe in order to promote this Deſign: It ſhews a great Contempt and Profanation of holy Things, in one who has taken upon him the Name of Chriſt, to neglect the Uſe of Faith for this Purpoſe.

The Truth is, that neither Faith, nor Righteouſneſs, ſuch as Man can produce, nor both together, can purchaſe the Salvation of a Sinner: The Death of Chriſt only is ſufficient for this: The Merits of whoſe Sacrifice muſt be applied by Faith, as the Means of Salvation; bringing forth Works of Righteouſneſs, as the End and Accompliſhment of theſe Means. And I have endeavoured to ſhew, as far as the Time would permit, that theſe Works of Righteouſneſs can be the Reſult only of a true Principle of Love or Benevolence, ſo rooted in the Heart as to influence and regulate a Man's whole Life and Conduct.

Thus is the Importance of Brotherly Love or Charity, in every View, manifeſt.

It was, in Fact, the original Perfection of Man: *He was created in the Image of God:* And *God is Love.*

And ſo eſſential is Love to the Happineſs of Man, that when this heavenly Gift was loſt, the Son of God came into the World, in order to reſtore it: He came to reſtore that Image of the Godhead which had been defaced: And that, we ſee, was Love.

The

The whole Life of our bleſſed Lord here on Earth was to the ſame Effect: *He went about doing Good*: Leaving us an Example that we ſhould follow him in Works of Love: In which he likewiſe followed the Example of his heavenly Father; who firſt created Man, and hath ever ſince been pouring down his Bleſſings upon him, becauſe he loved him.

From this View of the Importance of Brotherly Love, or Charity to Perſons in Diſtreſs in general; I come, in the *ſecond* Place, to conſider the Reaſonableneſs of making ſome particular Proviſion for thoſe Orphans and Widows, whoſe ſingular Circumſtances of Diſtreſs are the Occaſion of this Day's Solemnity.

And here it muſt be granted that, as Orphans and Widows only, their Condition is much to be pitied. They have loſt, generally ſpeaking, their beſt Friend, their greateſt Benefactor: The Perſon to whom they have been hitherto obliged, under Heaven, for the chief Bleſſings of Life; and in whom were centered all their Hopes of Happineſs in it for the Future. Recollect with yourſelves what is uſually the Situation of a Family, abounding with all other Bleſſings, when unexpectedly deprived of their Head and Father. If great be the Misfortune in ſuch Caſes; how much greater muſt it be, when, as in the preſent Inſtance, they have likewiſe loſt their chief or only Support?

It muſt alſo be granted, in Favour of the preſent Petitioners, that they are, for the moſt Part, *innocent* Sufferers: Or that their Misfortunes ariſe not from their own Fault.—We may add, that neither are they generally owing to any Fault of the deceaſed Huſband or Parent: Unleſs it be a Fault for a Man to

marry, without being able, at all Events, to make ſuitable Proviſion for a Family.

There are Inſtances, no Doubt, of Profuſion and Extravagance in Clergymen as well as others: We do not pretend, by being entered into the more immediate Service of Almighty God, to be entirely free from the Frailties and Infirmities of Men. But that Extravagance is the *general* Cauſe of the Diſtreſs we are conſidering; I am confident, is far from being true: At leaſt, many other Cauſes may be aſſigned; and I believe, with much more Juſtice.

Such are the Rank and Character which a Clergyman ſupports, or ought to ſupport in the World. He is not now, as in the Days of Superſtition, to ſhut himſelf up in a Cell or a Cloiſter: Neither is he to conſider himſelf, in the literal Senſe of the Words, as a *Stranger and Pilgrim on the Earth*: But he is expected to appear as a Member of the Community, as a Citizen of the World: In full Perſuaſion, that the innocent Enjoyment of this Life is not inconſiſtent with his Proſpect of a better.

By his Education, he has contracted a liberal Turn of Mind, and formed a liberal Acquaintance. Out of Reſpect to his Office, as well as his perſonal Accompliſhments, he is ſometimes expected to appear amongſt the *Higheſt*; and his Rank is generally allotted him with the *better* Sort, at leaſt, of his Neighbours. This, if it do not carry him into the common Expence of his Neighbours, will be apt to keep him from a narrow, contracted, parſimonious Way of Living: Which indeed, were he ever ſo much inclined to it, far from being proper, would be no ſmall Reproach to him. For the Love of Money, contemp-

tible

tible enough in any Man, is particularly inconſiſtent with the Character of a Miniſter of the Goſpel. He is expected, on the contrary, in Proportion to his Circumſtances, to be one of the *Firſt*, in Works of Hoſpitality, Generoſity, Charity. And I hope, generally is ſo: At leaſt, I am perſuaded that this is more frequently his true Character, than the oppoſite one, of being Selfiſh, Inhoſpitable, Unmerciful.

Theſe Things fairly conſidered, it is really much more to be wondered at, that ſome Clergymen are able to ſupport their Families while they live; than that they leave them unprovided for when they die. And if we take into the Account the greater Part of the Clergy in the Kingdom; ſo inadequate are their Incomes, as Clergymen, to the Demands even of a moderate Family; that it is ſcarce poſſible for them, if they live decently and reputably, to lay up any Thing conſiderable in Store againſt the evil Day.

Let us ſuppoſe then a Caſe not uncommon: That a Clergyman, whoſe Income is no better than that of the Generality of his Brethren, thinks proper to form a Connection, of all others, in this World, the moſt intereſting; in Hopes that, ſhould his Fortune continue only ſlender as it is, Heaven may may be ſo kind as to grant him his *Life*, in order to the better Maintenance of his Family: (and if Men might not truſt thus far to Providence, the far greater Part of Mankind would be condemned to a State of Celibacy) Suppoſing that a Clergyman thus circumſtanced, is, early in Life, cut off from what he eſteemed the chief Bleſſings of Life: What is the obvious Conſequence to his ſurviving Widow and Children? Having been accuſtomed to a cleanly, wholeſome, and orderly Manner

of

of Living, they are but badly prepared to engage with that Train of Evils which are the usual Attendants on Poverty: *They cannot dig, to beg they are ashamed.* This then is their great Distress: Not that they are more destitute of the Necessaries of Life than many others are (this we hope is never the Case): But that their Poverty has been preceded by better Fortune; that they have been accustomed to better Things: And that this, instead of being of any real Advantage to them (farther than as it may fairly challenge the peculiar Care of Providence, by the Hands of those *Ministers of Heaven*, who are blessed with an affluent Fortune, and with Hearts to make Use of it) serves only to render their present Condition the more miserable. This is a Consequence that arises from the Constitution of human Nature; which is formed, by Custom, to *Habits* of Good or Evil, of Prosperity or Adversity.

It has been said that *the distressed Condition of the Orphans and Widows of Clergymen is owing, in a great Measure, to the very unequal Distribution of the Revenues appropriated to the Maintenance of the Clergy: That were these divided amongst the Clergy, in such Manner as they ought to be (proper Allowance being made for their respective Stations and Abilities) their Widows and Children would not so often be left in distressed Circumstances.*

Possibly they might not: And yet what would be the Consequence of such a Division, as far as it regards the present Question, it is not easy to determine. But then neither is it material for us at present to attempt a Determination of this Question: Because

cauſe there is no Probability, that I know of, that we ſhall ever experience ſuch a Diviſion. At leaſt, it is not in the Power of the Perſons, to whom this is commonly objected, to make the Experiment: They muſt conſider the Matter, not as they might perhaps wiſh it to be, but as it really is. The Objection therefore, as it is ſometimes made, to the Stewards of this Charity, or its Friends and Supporters, can be underſtood only as a Pretence for not contributing any Thing towards the Promotion of it.

But ought not the Clergy to undertake amongſt themſelves to maintain the Families of their deceaſed Brethren? And are they not, upon the Whole, very well able to do this? Perhaps they might be well enough *able* to do this; were they to confine their Charity to theſe Objects only. But this, they apprehend, would be very inconſiſtent with the true Notion of Chriſtian Charity. After the Example of their Lord and Maſter, they are ever ready to extend their Acts of Kindneſs and Compaſſion, according to their Abilities, to Objects of Diſtreſs in general. And if the Clergy, by this Means, contribute in full Proportion towards the Support of the Laity; they think it but reaſonable, at leaſt till ſome other Proviſion be made for this Purpoſe, that the Laity, in their Turn, ſhould thus contribute towards the Support of the Orphans and Widows of the Clergy.

Give me Leave to add, as a farther Inducement to the Lay-Part of my Audience, (for I think it needleſs to offer any particular Motives, by Way of exciting the hearty Aſſiſtance of you, my Brethren) that there never was a Time perhaps, when your

Assistance was more seasonable than the present. Abundance of Riches in the Nation, the Consequence of an extended and successful Commerce, seems, at first View, to have made a Scarcity of every Thing else. This must undoubtedly be admitted as *one* Cause of the advanced Price of most of the Necessaries of Life. But whatever may have occasioned this more than ordinary Change; the Consequence is certain,—it greatly distresses all those whose Income is but moderate, and yet stated and determined: And therefore it is a great Misfortune to many of the inferior Clergy themselves, as well as to the Orphans and Widows of Clergymen. Hence that annual Relief which hath been allotted by this Society to the present Objects of your Charity, will not perhaps purchase more than Half of the Necessaries of Life, which the same Sum would have procured at the first Institution of this Society. And yet the Stewards and Dispensers of your Charity will not be able, I suppose, to make any extraordinary Allowance to their Petitioners: (unless they should be encouraged to do it from some extraordinary Contributions) Because it is probable that the same Reason which adds to the *Distress* of their Petitioners, will likewise add to the *Number* of them.

These are some of the many Considerations which recommend to your particular Protection the Orphans and Widows of Clergymen. I have thought it sufficient barely to relate their Case to you: Knowing your Readiness, upon all Occasions, to relieve Distress; and thinking myself happy in being an Advocate

vocate for Charity, in a Place not more famous for Wealth, than for the generous Application of it.

To the ſame Principle of Benevolence therefore, from which many excellent Things have been done by you, we truſt for your aſſiſting, and for your continuing to aſſiſt this our Labour of Love. By miniſtring to the Neceſſities of the Orphans and Widows of Clergymen; you ſhew your Regard, not only for the Clergy themſelves, but for that holy Religion of which they have the Honour to be the Miniſters. Nay Farther: You ſhew your Regard for the great Founder of that Religion, the Author and Finiſher of your Faith: Who has not only taught us *to love one another, as he hath loved us;* but hath expreſsly declared, that in the great Day of Accounts, when he will appear as Judge of all the Earth, he will conſider all ſuch Acts of Brotherly Love, or Charity to Perſons in Diſtreſs, as done unto himſelf, and will reward them as ſuch. *In as much,* ſays he, *as ye have done it unto one of the leaſt of theſe my Brethren, ye have done it unto me.*

May this gracious Aſſurance be your great Encouragement in this Life; and your Comfort in the next. *Amen.*

F I N I S.